Lynn Rivers' Capitol Corner

106th Congress, January 1999 Edition

A newsletter by Congresswoman Lynn N. Rivers representing Michigan's 13th Congressional District





December 19, 1998

Dear Friends,

Today I am filled with sorrow. As a nation, we are in great pain. We are divided, angry, and suspicious of one another. I see the casualties of this great battle everywhere. I see citizens who love their country, who believe in democracy, but who have become disillusioned, angry, and cynical about the political process. I see young people who are confused and disappointed, and who wonder why this process is so different from what they learned in Civics class. I see the scholars, professors, and constitutionalists who believe that those who disagree with them are, at best, unqualified or (in far too many cases) partisans who have prostituted their professional values in order to support a particular outcome. I see people of faith, who are struggling to chart a course through difficult moral waters, lash out at the deeply held beliefs of others and, in many cases, impugn their motives, morality and theological convictions. I see Members of Congress - most of whom are honest, hardworking public servants - who will forever be diminished in the eyes of some of their constituents, whose voting records, personal integrity, and public accountability will be discounted completely or viewed with suspicion hereafter, and whose words, motives, and trustworthiness will be irreparably tarnished.

What has brought us to this point?

Clearly, most of the blame for the current controversy must be laid directly on the doorstep of the President of the United States. His personal behavior and his attempts to avoid his obligations under the law cannot be excused, defended, or justified. But the blame is not his alone. Each of us must share the burden for what our political process has become. The discourse, and the tactics that the American public accepts today are undeniably meaner - and more personal - than ever before. Studies suggest that the current political climate has not only driven competent, qualified candidates away, but has also pushed out moderate, independent voters leaving a much more partisan - and volatile - electorate. Candidates and parties tailor their message appropriately. As columnist George Will pointed out, "In America today our political opponents are not just wrong, they are evil."

There are certainly other factors that have contributed to bringing us to the place we find ourselves and each should be considered fully in the future. However, none of these factors can be argued to justify any other factor. In other words, we have numerous instances of wrongdoing that must all be evaluated, remedied, and then put behind us.

And that, of course, will be the test of the United States as a nation and each of us as human beings. Can we respect the differences of opinion that exist within our country? Can we disagree on important issues but accept that we are all Americans? In short, can we move forward as a nation? I hope we can. I have done my very best to be true to my oath to uphold the Constitution, to represent my constituency, and to be true to the values on which I stand. I recognize that we do not all agree but I have done my best to do what I believe is right.

The next few months may very well define this nation's course for the next several years. Please take advantage of the opportunity to talk with me and your neighbors about the important issues that face us as Americans. Join me for coffee or come to a forum or town hall. I want to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Lynn N. Rivers

Washington Office 1724 Longworth H.O.B. Washington, D.C. 20515 (202) 225-6261

email Lynn.Rivers@mail.house.gov internet <u>Ypsilanti Office</u> 301 W. Michigan Ave. Ste 400 Ypsilanti, MI 48197 htm (734) 485-3741

http://www.house.gov/rivers/welcome.htm



"Mr. Speaker, I do not approve of nor defend, the behavior of the president that has brought us here. I have no interest in helping him avoid the legal consequences of those acts. However, I have every interest in making sure those consequences are constitutional.

The constitution tells us a President can only be impeached and removed by Congress for treason, bribery and other high crimes and misdemeanors. The founding fathers were clear that the careful balance of powers between the branches could be altered in only the most extraordinary circumstances.

Alexander Hamilton in The Federalist #65 argued that impeachment is meant to address `the misconduct of public men,' `the violation of some public trust,' or `to address injuries done immediately to the society itself.'

Wooddeson, a legal scholar whose writings in 1777 were nearly contemporaneous with the drafting of the Constitution, and whose views on English impeachment provided the foundation for much of the impeachment discussion in Jefferson's Manual spoke to the use of impeachment to prosecute `magistrates and officers entrusted with the administration of public affairs [who] abuse their delegated powers to the extensive detriment of the community, and. . . in a manner not properly cognizable before ordinary tribunals.'

The standards set forth by the founding fathers remain vital and immutable--we are not free to add to the list of impeachable offenses, no matter how worthy our additions.

Just last year in Clinton v. Jones--in a 9-0 decision, the Supreme Court referred to the historical standard for impeachment when it quoted James Wilson--delegate to both the Philadelphia and Pennsylvania conventions-who said `that although the President is placed on high, not a single privilege is annexed to his character; far from being above the laws, he is amenable to them in his private character as a citizen and in his public character by impeachment.' The justices go on to say that `with respect to acts taken in his `public character'... that is official acts... the President may be disciplined, principally by impeachment... But he is otherwise subject to the laws for his purely private acts.'

As you probably recall, the Supreme Court allowed Ms. Jones' lawsuit to go forward expressly because it was the personal, private conduct of the President that was at issue. The conduct before us is the same.

The history is clear and so is our duty. The behaviors at issue here-if proven--are punishable in the Courts. They are not, however, of the `public' character necessary to rise to the level of impeachable offenses.

I will vote no--not because I believe the President should be (*Impeach*, page 3)

Do You Know ...

...13th District city history?

Identify the nickname, motto, or source for each of the following cities in the 13th District:

- 1. Belleville
 2. Canton

 A. Sweet Corn Capital
 B. "City of Pride, Purpose and Promise"
- 3. Garden City C. A former Russian province
- 4. Westland D. French for "beautiful village"
- 5. Ypsilanti E. Named for Massachusetts home of original settlers
- 6. Inkster
 7. Plymouth
 F. "The City that Works"
- G. "The Sun Parlour of Detroit"
 - H. Norse for "summer pasture"

floor.

Censure Resolution never comes to a vote

Despite general agreement that Bill Clinton's actions were wrong and disgraceful to the Office of the President, many people do not think that he deserves to be impeached or removed from office. Instead, many feel that he should be strongly reprimanded for his mistakes as a serious, but less-drastic solution. As a result, the concept of censure received a great deal of attention during the recent debate on impeachment. Nevertheless, a censure resolution never came to a vote in the House of Representatives.

Some members of the House Judiciary Committee did draft a censure resolution, but the Committee voted (along party lines) not to bring it to the House

After the Articles of Impeachment were approved and sent to the full House, another attempt was made to allow a vote on censure. Members made a motion to recommit the Articles to the Judiciary Committee for amendment.

| Yes | N o | Present | Not Voting |
|-----|-----|---------|---------------|
| 230 | 204 | 0 | 1 |

The purpose of this would have been solely and specifically to replace the Articles with the censure resolution.

This motion was objected to on the grounds that censure was not "germane" (or relevant) to the issue of impeachment. The Speaker of the House ruled in favor of the objection, and his ruling was appealed. That appeal was "tabled," or indefinitely delayed.

The vote that was taken was not a vote for or against censure. It only determined if a House vote on censure would even be allowed to take place. Voting "yes" at this time would have prevented the House from ever voting on the censure resolution, while voting "no" - as I did - would have allowed the House a chance to vote.

(*Impeach*, from page 2)

able to avoid the legal consequences ordinary Americans would face in similar circumstances, but because I believe he should face exactly the same consequences: trial in a court of law. This outcome does not subvert the law, as the majority argues, but in fact, observes the law as the Constitution demands. The founding fathers, more than 200 years ago, and the Supreme Court, just last year, laid out the course we must follow.

The Constitution must be our guide. The wrath that the citizens of this country delivered upon us when we shut down the government will be nothing compared to what will happen if we rape the Constitution."

As the results above indicate, the House chose not to vote on censure, forcing members to make an all or nothing decision on impeachment.

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If you would like to receive this monthly newsletter in the mail, please return the form below to:

Congresswoman Lynn Rivers 301 W. Michigan Ave. Ste. 400 Ypsilanti, MI 48197

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Name

Address

City, Zip

District offices combine at new Ypsilanti location

During the break between the end of the last Congress and the start of the 106th, my 13th District Congressional offices in Wayne and Ann Arbor wer consolidated - and improved - into a single new location in Ypsilanti.

In making this decision, I considered all of the things that go into making a Congressional office convenient for all of the people I represent. Finding the best way to use taxpayers' dollars to provide the best possible service i important to me. Therefore, I looked to improve my operation and not just t

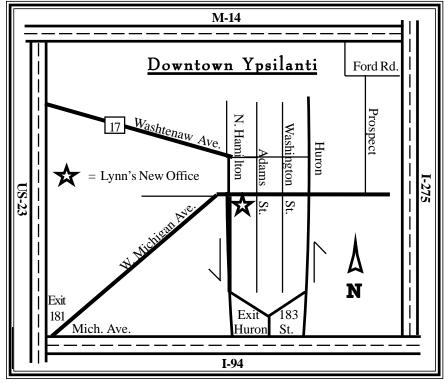
The new office had to be accessible. Ypsilanti is near the actual geogr is more parking for visitors, especially those requiring parking for the dis problem at my Ann Arbor location.

Additionally, the new office space allows my entire district staff to work together at one location. Before the move, constituents from Ann Arbor needing assistance with immigration and/or veterans' matters had to travel all the way to Wayne to meet with a caseworker, while constituents from Wayne County who wished to discuss social security problems had to travel to Ann Arbor for help. This 40 mile commute between offices was both costly and disruptive.

Relocating to the new Ypsilanti office makes it possible for me to offer all constituent services in one central location while lowering costs and enhancing convenience for the people I serve.



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Lynn is hosting the following of



offee Hours - Wayne:

Friday, January 22, 1999 8:30 am - 10:00 am Alex's Garden Patch Restaurant 38910 Michigan Avenue, Wayne



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ι City: Saturday . 1999 10:00 a

Maplewood Community Center 31735 Maplewood Road, Garden City



offee Hours - Plymouth:

Friday, January 29, 1999 8:30 am - 10:00 am Plymouth Coffee Bean 884 Penniman, Plymouth



Answers to Do You Know... (1. D), (2. A), (3. G), (4. B),(5. F), (6. H), (7. E), (8. C).